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EPA: West Chester site has been dumping grounds since '30s

Land owner indicted by Butler County grand jury for illegal disposal of hazardous waste.

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When Ray Skinner II allowed two Fairfield businessmen to rid themselves of hazardous materials by dumping more than 100 tons of leaded glass on his property, the local resident was doing so just feet from a former Superfund site, authorities say.

The former Skinner Landfill in the 8700 block of Cincinnati-Dayton Road contained hazardous waste dumped there since the mid-1930s, according to documents obtained from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Albert Skinner accepted a variety of wastes, including hazardous chemicals, from 1934 until 1990, EPA documents state.

A fire in 1976 lead Ohio EPA officials to investigate the site, and officials found that Albert Skinner had covered a nearby lagoon with demolition debris in an attempt to hinder the investigation.

Trenches in the lagoon revealed black and orange liquids and a number of barrels of waste, documents state.

The site was placed on the National Priorities List in 1982, and was prohibited from accepting additional materials eight years later. Clean-up was complete by 2001.

Just six years later, Ray Skinner II would begin accepting additional hazardous waste on his property, authorities say, which is bordered on one side by the East Fork of the Mill Creek.

Tests conducted on the creek and other surrounding areas showed no immediate contamination had taken place, although the threat of such was serious enough that remediation was a necessity, EPA documents state.

Contractors found 77 cubic yard cardboard containers and one "supersack" of crushed computer and other lead-tainted glass located along the fence of the closed Skinner landfill.

A packing slip alerted authorities the rapidly deteriorating containers came from Tri State Computers, which became Tri-E Technologies, formerly of Fairfield.

"We believe the lead stayed within the boundaries (of the site)," said Kathy Clayton, on-scene coordinator with the EPA.

Ray Skinner could not be reached for comment. However, his son, Jesse, said late last week it was doubtful his father knew what was being dumped on the property.

"Every time we see someone who's down there (at the dump site), dad would chase them down," Jesse Skinner said.

"So I don't think it was anything deliberate."

State officials believed otherwise, and a Butler County grand jury agreed, handing down indictments on Ray Skinner May 20 for illegal disposal of hazardous waste, illegal storage of hazardous waste and criminal endangering.

Ray Skinner is also facing unrelated drug charges, including two counts of aggravated trafficking in drugs and permitting drug abuse, for allegedly selling the prescription drug Fentanyl from the property off Cincinnati-Dayton Road across the street from Union Elementary.

The severity of the drug charges resulted from the proximity of the school, West Chester Twp. police said.

Skinner is due before Butler County Common Pleas Court Judge Noah Powers Thursday, May 28. The Ohio Attorney General's Office is prosecuting the case.

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